

Solo Tuned Percussion: A perspective upon 21st century percussion

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Please find attached a DVD with a copy of my two recitals:

Michael Hurdley Recital Feb 2017

Michael Hurdley Recital July 2017

These recitals were performed and recorded in front of a live audience and formed the practical element of my research.

To many, the idea of percussion music conjures merely a series of loud banging sounds and crashing effects, heard from the back of an ensemble. This is not only the perspective of the casual listener of music, but also the view of many musicians and composers alike. One of the greatest composer and orchestrators, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, stated percussion instruments 'do not take any harmonic or melodic part in the orchestra, and can only be considered as ornamental instruments pure and simple. They have no intrinsic musical meaning, and are only just mentioned by the way.' (Korsakov and Steinberg, 1964) Accordingly, many people would prefer to see the percussion section maintain its habitual place in the background of the ensemble, however there is no doubt percussion music has the potential to be performed in an incredibly musical, expressive and interesting fashion.

Many historians speculate that following the human voice, percussion instruments were the first musical instruments utilised by man. This seems to fit with our knowledge of prehistoric technology, as percussion instruments are defined as 'Musical instruments played by striking with the hand or with a stick or beater, or by shaking, including drums, cymbals, xylophones, gongs, bells, and rattles.' (Oxford University Press, 2017) To this end, it seems strange that the percussion family has the perceived reputation as being the most simplistic and almost least musical of all instruments, when in fact it was fundamental in the development of music and musical instruments to date.

In the orchestra, the percussion section has developed significantly: originally starting as only a set of timpani, it now encompasses a huge array of instruments and effects from across the world, enabling a wide range of characteristics and sounds for composers to manipulate and utilise. Because of this, the use of percussion as a solo instrument has also significantly grown. Due to this growth in the role of percussion in ensemble settings, increasing numbers of composers have started to write music specifically for solo percussion during the 20th century. This has led to the emergence of professional performers of the solo percussion repertoire, such as; Keiko Abe, Evelyn Glennie, Casey Cangelosi and Nebojsa Zivkovic. However, the vast majority of performers for solo percussion music

are established professional composers; there are very few non-percussion players who have attempted to write for the instrument. Over the last 25 years, there has developed a clear contrast between music written to showcase the technical ability of the performer, or used to allow teaching of specific techniques, and pieces written to allow the performer to show a more musical and virtuosic style of playing. This increase in repertoire and the place within concert life for solo tuned percussion in contemporary performance has created a greater sophistication in what started as a very simplistic family of instruments.

This thesis aims to show exactly how solo tuned percussion has developed in the 21st century, and will consider some of the most influential and prolific composers for tuned percussion instruments throughout Europe. Through the study of a wide collection of pieces from these composers, in the form of two recitals, the aim is to demonstrate how the range and wealth of literature available to the solo tuned performer has developed in the 21st century. However, before examining the individual pieces in more detail, it is important to establish the place of the instruments used within the recitals - the marimba and the vibraphone - within the percussion family and the key compositional techniques available to the composers.

The vibraphone is the most recent addition to the tuned percussion family, specifically the mallet percussion family. Since the 1930's, the vibraphone has been developed and evolved as a strong jazz, concert and solo percussion instrument. "Gary Burton has been routinely credited with having independently brought vibraphone technique to a new level of virtuosity by playing with two mallets in each hand, a practice which he had taken up in the early 1960s." (Bevan and Kernfeld, 2003). This increased interest in the vibraphone as techniques have developed has led to a drastic increase in the volume of literature available to performers for the instrument as a solo instrument, within ensembles and for pedagogical motives. This growth in material available and the demand for it, is a huge demonstration of the considerable growth in popularity of the instrument. The appearance,

resonance, timbre and size of the vibraphone requires performers to utilise many techniques not appropriate to the other instruments within the tuned percussion family. These techniques include a high technical ability to play with four mallets, an understanding of how to appropriately voice notes within a chord, mallet dampening, pedalling, and in some cases, extended techniques including bowing, pitch bending and utilising harmonics of a note.

The vibraphone performance, as an unaccompanied entity, is still a fairly recent development in contrast to many other solo instruments and the majority of performers on the vibraphone usually are accompanied by at least a rhythm section. Unaccompanied performance for vibraphone can benefit all performers, even those who have no wish to perform as soloists, as if the player takes time to practice solo playing they can develop their abilities and make themselves a more interesting ensemble player. Performing and writing music for solo vibraphone presents many challenges for composers. The lack of rhythm section can present problems in creating texture and interest. A further issue that faces composers when writing for vibraphone is that compared to marimba, it has a fairly narrow range of three octaves from F3 to F6. There are also issues around the timbre of the instrument, as if the music moves above middle C on the vibraphone, the instrument loses any real bass sound quality, affecting the key that many pieces can be written in.

Mallet dampening is an incredibly useful technique, which if used effectively, can greatly enhance the musical potential of the vibraphone. Ed Saindon states in an article "Dampening on the vibraphone" that "There are a number of reasons why dampening becomes a musical necessity: 1.) To execute a moving line against accompaniment, 2.) To differentiate between different types of articulation, 3.) To project certain harmonies with a melodic line, and 4.) To play multi lines with clarity." (Saindon, 1978. p.50-51) The physical process of mallet dampening is achieved by pressing the end of the mallet against the bar, after it has been struck, to stop the note resonating while the pedal of the instrument is still pressed down. This allows other notes within a melodic line, or chord,

to resonate but specific notes to be stopped, creating the effects described above. To allow this to be done with minimal effect on the overall sound and least disruption to the musical image, it is generally done at the same time another note is struck.

There are three main types of mallet dampening: same hand dampening where the same hand that played the note dampens the note; opposite hand dampening where a mallet strikes a note, then a mallet from the other hand dampens the note; and slide dampening, where a note is struck and the mallet is used to immediately dampen a preceding note with the same mallet in an almost sliding motion, although the mallet does not actually just slide from note to note. Opposite hand dampening is generally used where the material being played moves in either a strict ascending or descending direction across the instrument.

The issue of mallet dampening is handled very differently by different composers. Some composers leave when to dampen notes entirely to the performer, others specify which notes should be dampened and when. This presents an interesting argument, as in many cases the notes that have been dampened will change the overall chord, so if chosen by the performer they may possibly change the idea the composer had for how the piece should sound.

Given that the majority of percussionists are taught to play mallet percussion on a xylophone and then advance onto the marimba, correct use of pedalling is generally taught only at higher levels and can be viewed as quite daunting to the beginner performer. Jon Metzger claims that:

“For many mallet players, dealing with the use of the vibes pedal is cause for alarm. Some even panic as if their marimba suddenly and mysteriously grew an appendage overnight while they were away from the practice room. The pedal needn’t be thought of as a strange growth. In fact, when using the pedal, you can use many of the same thoughts that guide you in deciding whether to sustain a note on marimba. On the vibes, it’s easy. You don’t have to roll as you do on a marimba to sustain a note. Just depress the pedal and a struck note will ring.” (Metzger, 1996, p.18-19)

Given the view shared by many percussionists on the difficulty of pedalling, it is in fact an incredibly simple idea: hold the pedal down and the notes will ring, release the pedal and the notes will be dampened. The difficulty around this is utilising this accessory to the instrument to best articulate a melodic line or chord. Many composers choose to write into their material exactly when and where the pedal should be used and released, however some decide instead to leave it to the performer to choose when to pedal. Prescribing exactly when to pedal within the melodic material gives a clear image to the performer as to exactly what the composer was trying to achieve. It can, however, constrict the creativity of the performer and give them less freedom to interpret passages of music and develop their own ideas. When composers choose not to write in pedalling directions, it does give the performer far more freedom to create their own interpretation. However, this may alter the style and not convey the original ideas of the composer. This lack of direction can also cause issues and difficulties for the novice player as they may not have the ability to pedal effectively enough to make sure the melodic line is not lost amongst the harmonic material of a piece, although melodic line is not always the key defining influence on when a performer should use the pedal of the instrument. Other ideas such as harmony, dynamics, articulation, phrasing and the image the music is trying to convey also have a huge influence on how a performer should approach pedalling throughout a piece.

The origins of the marimba are uncertain: some historians believe the instrument to have originated in Southeast Asia somewhere around the 14th Century, while many others claim that its origins are in Africa then brought to South America in around the 16th century. (Rager, 2008). “Today’s concert marimba was developed in the first decades of the 20th century by US xylophone manufacturers who combined elements of the xylophone (of European descent without resonators) and the Central American marimba (four to five octaves, chromatic, with resonators).” (Kite, 2013)

With the exception of Percy Grainger's *nadimba* from the suite *In a Nutshell* (1916), the idea of composing in a modern style for the marimba was not a focus for composers until after the Second World War. The vast majority of the material available in the 20th century for marimba performers focused "primarily on transcriptions of music for other instruments or arrangements of light classics, violin music, and popular songs." (Kite, 2013) "Milhaud's Concerto for marimba and vibraphone (1947), in which the technique of four-hammer playing was exploited, was one of the first postwar compositions to make extensive use of the marimba." (Kubik, Blades and Holland, 2001)

There are certain limitations that composers must take into consideration when writing for marimba. Many of these are simply down to the sheer size of the instrument, compounded by the fact that marimba players vary in physical size. Because of the size of the marimba, simultaneous or extreme variances in register become very problematic. While it is physically possible to play the highest and lowest notes of the instrument simultaneously, it requires the player to radically alter their stance behind the instrument, limiting the player's technique. Dexterity and speed, are considerations that must be made for all instrumentalists, but particularly affect a marimba player due to "the number of playing surfaces involved and the distance between them, the weight of the implement being used, dynamics, endurance, sticking, and physical balance" (Solomon, 2002. p.80)

Recital February 2017

As part of my research into percussion music and performance, I gave the first of my two recitals in February 2017, with a programme consisting of *Katamiya* by Emmanuel Séjourné, *First Toy* by Igor Lesnik, *Eisblumen* by Matthias Schmitt, *Il Sognio Di Pacioccchino* by Nebojsa Zivkovic and ending with *Butterfly* by Nils Rohwer. This gave me, I felt, a good contrast of pieces across both vibraphone and marimba and allowed me to showcase a range of different compositional techniques and ideas from my chosen composers. My hopes for the recital were to contrast some quite technically challenging pieces against pieces that allowed greater freedom of expression as a performer, while also creating a good varied recital for the interest of the audience.

Katamiya (1995) – Emmanuel Sejourne

Emmanuel Séjourné is a French composer, who's music is "rhythmic, romantic, energetic, inspired both by Western classical tradition and by popular culture" (Séjourné, 2017). He has not limited his compositional output solely to percussion, but has composed for orchestras, ensembles and choirs. When asked if he started composing to contribute to the development of the marimba and percussion repertoire he stated: "Not at all, I do not write mostly for the marimba, I write a lot for something else. I like to compose, since always, and although I often wrote for percussion, the percussionists know my studies well, I do not compose exclusively for percussion. ... Many percussionists have written to feed the repertoire; this is not my case." (Leroux, 2003)

His piece, *Katamiya*, was written in 1995 as only his third piece for solo marimba, and was written at a similar time to his other works *African Song Duo – for two marimbas* (1994), *African Song Trio – for three marimbas* (1992), and *Martian Tribes – for four percussion* (1995), and *Katamiya* clearly shares this African style of writing. I chose this piece to open the recital as it is highly energetic and exciting to capture the audience straight away.

The opening bar of the piece, marked as very soft and rubato, creates an atmospheric start to the piece. I have tried here to ensure that, despite needing harder and more articulate mallets for the

later sections of the piece, that the soft feel is achieved here by slowing my roll speed and accelerating thought the chord changes, warming the notes as the chords change, as well as using the softer tips of the mallets on the notes. The idea was to create a sense of the opening having no real pulse or rhythm so to contrast with the rest of the piece.

As the first section of the piece begins in bars 2-9, I wanted to really capture a relaxed feel, almost depicting a beach scene (as seen in figure 1). As part of this, I decided to play the piece slightly under the marked tempo of 112, instead aiming for around 106. It was vital to the overall image I was trying to conjure that the rhythms were established immediately, clear and balanced between both the left and right hand. Séjourné has written that the bass line in the left should play above the dynamic of the right hand, however I did not want to overdo this in order to keep a balance between making sure the melodic line was clear but the complex rhythm came through. I also wanted to try and achieve an almost string bass like feel in the left hand, meaning I aimed for a softer strike to the note, whilst keeping it strong enough to be dominant over the right hand “ghostly” notes.

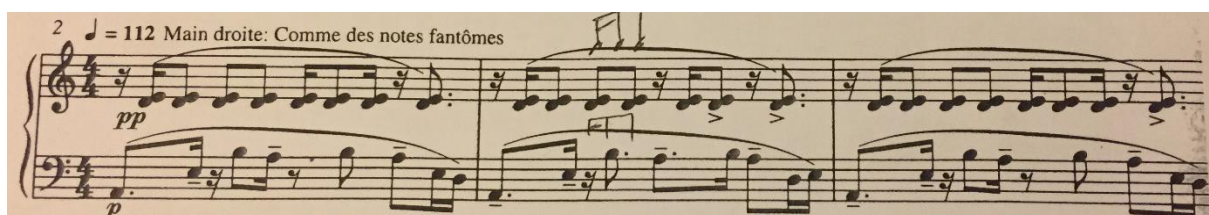


Figure 1. Bars 2-4 of *Katamiya*. Séjourné. E. 1995.

As the next part of the tune is introduced in bars 10-23, I wanted to create the idea of there being 2 halves to every bar: the melody and then accompaniment or answering phrase. This is seen highlighted below in bars 11 and 12 (figure 2) with the main melody being the first 2 beats of each bar and the second 2 beats answering that. This hopefully creates a good contrast across the melody of the piece.



Figure 2. Bars 11-12 of *Katamiya*. Séjourné. E. 1995.

During this section of the piece, there are very few dynamics marked and even then the dynamic range of the piece as a whole is very narrow, ranging from only *pp* to *mf*. This meant that I had to choose carefully which parts of the melodic line to bring through, to maintain interest for the audience.

The final section of the piece uses the material from the introduction with some rhythmic differences. I wanted this section to complete the image of a beach, with this being the ocean washing away. Again, it was very important to clearly establish the feel of the piece and the rhythms between both hands, with the bass line again being stronger than the accompanying right hand.

First Toy (1994)– Igor Lesnik

First Toy was written by Croatian percussionist and composer Igor Lesnik in 1994, as part of a collection of three pieces called *Midnight Pieces* for solo vibraphone. *First Toy* being the first movement features a slow rubato feel and heavy jazz influence, whilst the second movement *The Look of the Year* is a fast Latin style piece which relies upon an independent salsa style bassline in the performer's left hand and the third and final movement *Waltz for Midnight* features complex harmonies in a slow and expressive piece. Lesnik's performance notes suggest that many sections in this third movement may be improvised as chord symbols are provided, and that jazz phrasing must be kept in mind by the performer. I chose this piece as the second in my recital as it comes as a complete contrast to the energetic and fast paced *Katamiya* and allowed me to really showcase some of my own musicality and interpretation.

The general image I wanted to achieve for the piece was a free improvised rubato feel. However, to make sure the piece still had a pulse, rhythmic accuracy was essential. As much as I wanted to be able to move with some fluidity of tempo throughout the piece, I did not want it to sound as if there was no tempo at all.

A key point to consider when playing this piece, is whether to follow Lesnik's prescribed mallet dampening and pedalling directions, in order to stay true to what his image of the piece is. Throughout the piece, Lesnik very clearly identifies exactly where and when the pedal of the vibraphone should be used and which notes should be dampened. When initially learning the piece I attempted to follow his instructions closely, however due to the acoustics of my recital venue, St. Paul's Hall, there were certain changes I felt I needed to make. In the opening 2 bars of the piece, Lesnik clearly writes that the final semiquavers of bar 1 and 2 as well as the demisemiquavers bar 2 beat 2 (figure 3) should be played with the pedal up. I felt in my chosen acoustic, this dried out the sound of the piece and clashed with the rest of the piece. However, in bar 19 (figure 4) Lesnik writes that the pedal should remain pressed down throughout the whole of the bar. I found that with this, the mouth vibrato could not clearly be heard. I therefore instead chose to pedal just before playing the G, so that this technique could be clearly heard.

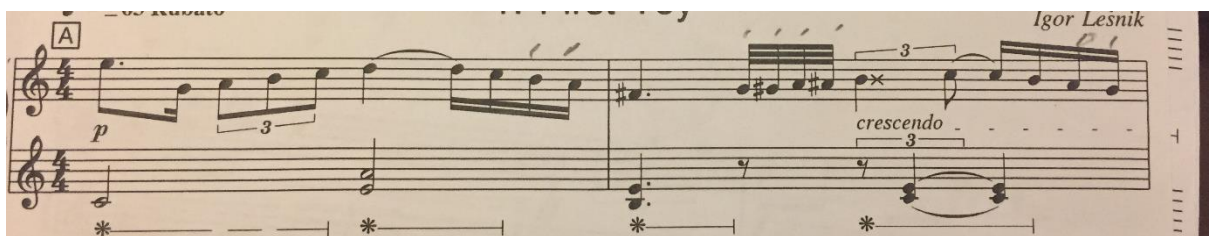


Figure 3. Bars 1-2 of *First Toy*. Lesnik, I. 1994

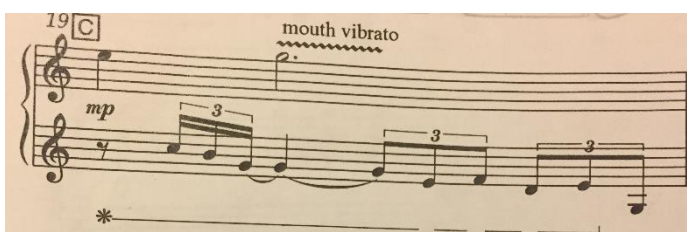


Figure 4. Bar 19 of *First Toy*. Lesnik, I. 1994

Eisblumen – Matthias Schmitt

Published in 2003 by German percussionist and composer Matthias Schmitt, *Eisblumen* or *Frost Flower* for solo vibraphone is one of very few compositions for solo vibraphone by Schmitt. Schmitt studied at the Würzburg Herman Zilcher Conservatory, with his first study instrument being the piano and second study the clarinet. At the end of the 70's, Schmitt came in contact with the composer and percussion teacher, Siegfried Fink which led to studies and greater involvement with percussion instruments, which eventually made his career as a composer and teacher. (Norsk-Percussion, nd)

Schmitt is far more known for his music written for marimba, percussion ensemble or percussion and orchestra, including the works *Ghanaia*, *Sechs Miniaturen*, *Nocturne* and *Corrido* which have all become well established pieces in percussion repertoire. Although named by Schmitt as *Frost Flower* the name is actually translated as “Ice Flower” and features a delicate and thoughtful melody combined with a heavy blues style influence.

This piece heavily relies on the performers ability to control the melody using the outside right stick in a four mallet grip. This presented a technical challenge for me, as I have been taught to use Steven's grip, meaning control and strength over my inner sticks is generally better than over the outer ones. It can clearly be seen in Schmitt's writing style, which notes he views as being the melody line as he chooses to write these with the stems up as seen in a bars 8 and 9 (figure 5). With this in mind, I tried to ensure that the melodic line could at all times be heard above the harmony. It also became important with this idea of melody and accompaniment, that as the harmony changed I used the pedal to clear the texture so that the changes could be easily heard. As Schmitt has decided not to write any pedal indications for the performer, I decided to use his phrase markings as an indication of how to phrase the melodic line.

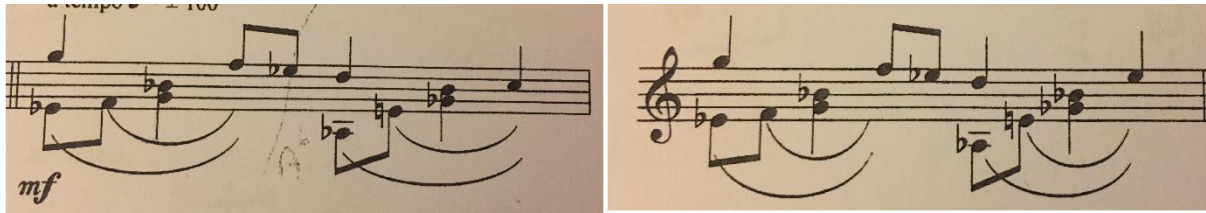


Figure.5. Bars 8-9 *Eisblumen* by Matthias Schmitt, 2003

Il Sogno Di Paciocchino – Nebojsa Zivkovic

Hailed by the critics as one of the most unique and expressive marimba and percussion artists in the field today, Nebojsa Jovan Zivkovic has greatly influenced the international percussion scene during the last two decades – as both a masterful composer and virtuoso performer. (Yamaha, 2014) As a composer, he has published works for solo vibraphone, marimba, xylophone as well as percussion ensemble, which have become standards in percussion repertoire worldwide. His works *Ilijas*, *Ultimatum1*, *Trio per uno* and *Suomineito* have been performed by some of the world's leading percussion performers.

Il Sogno Di Paciocchino was published in 2001 as part of the book *Funny Mallets: Funny Marimba Book 2-M*, a book of 8 pieces each designed to utilise a different aspect of marimba playing. I chose this piece for my recital as it is a complete contrast to my other pieces as a very soft, emotional piece. The name *Il Sogno Di Paciocchino* means a lullaby for a small child and this lullaby idea is seen through the repetitive nature of the piece, the very quiet dynamic range and the smooth texture of the piece.

One of the key ideas I wanted to convey with this piece, was a smoothness in my transition between the chords. This idea of moving from one chord to the next without a break in the sound being produced relied heavily on a controlled speed of roll. The way I tried to achieve this was by finding the chord, warming my roll speed up through the length of the note allowing the notes to

resonate and cover my movement to the next chord in a sequence. As this piece relies heavily on an almost chorale style of writing in the main melodic material, it became essential that each moving line could be heard clearly. I also chose to play this piece in my first recital, in St. Paul's, as this acoustic was much more resonant, allowing each chord to resonate while I moved to the next in each sequence.

In contrast to these smooth chorale style passages, Zivkovic writes several semiquaver runs up and down the instrument. These seem to be written to disrupt the smooth passages, almost like the child in the lullaby is being disturbed or woken. As much as the written dynamics of these do not rise too far above the rest of the piece, I wanted to really accentuate this and change the timbre to create a more intense feel, relaxing back into the chords that follow.

Butterfly – Nils Rohwer

Nils Rohwer is a German percussionist, drummer and composer who studied at the Detmold Academy of music. For the past 16 years, Rohwer has been working with pianist Jens Schliecker as part of the ensemble "Piano meets vibes" whose music incorporates a vast repertoire utilising elements from "jazz, Latin-American, folk, classical and modern music" (Alan, C. 2017) As well as his work as a performer, Rohwer has composed for percussion ensembles, solo percussion instruments and drum kit. Rohwer claims that "For every percussionist it is a nice opportunity to develop his skills in the tonal field. Important here are basic knowledge of the theory of harmony, which are developed together with technical exercises on the instrument. Parallel to this, solo literature is being developed with the aim of developing the ability to improvise." (Rohwer, 2017) This idea of developing a firm technical foundation behind a performance, as well as Rohwer's influences from his ensemble work is clearly seen throughout his compositions. His piece *Butterfly* was published in 2010 and is one of Rohwer's earliest works for solo marimba, following *DaMa – Dance* 2004 and

written alongside *Marimbayana* 2011. These solo marimba pieces come as a contrast to Rohwer's earlier works, which are mostly written for percussion ensemble, solo vibraphone and drum kit.

Butterfly is clearly written to try and allow the performer space to create their own interpretation of the music, whilst also requiring a strong technical foundation.

During the rubato sections seen in bars 1-3 and then again in bars 24 and 25 (Figure 6), I wanted to really try and create a feel of fluidity and freedom throughout the bar. It was therefore vital that all the notes within each chord was struck perfectly together, to ensure the full harmony of each chord was clear, and to allow rhythmic accuracy and the pulse to be clear.

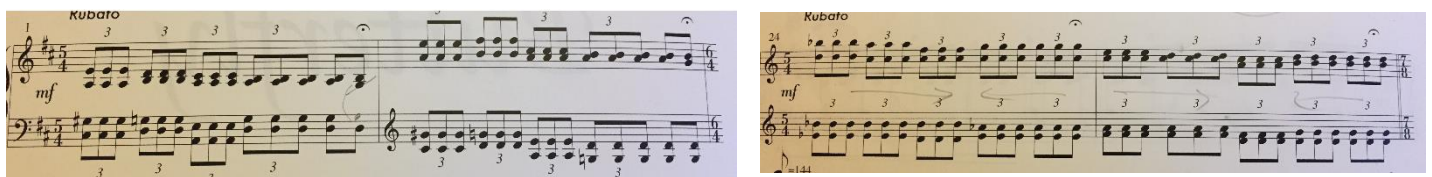


Figure 6. Bars 1-3 and 24-25. *Butterfly* by Nils Rohwer 2010

The main melodic motif for the piece is introduced in bars 4 and 5 (figure 7), here it can be seen that Rohwer is trying to mirror the idea of a butterfly's wings flapping in the right hand of the performer, as the intervals change quickly. This image of a butterfly floating along is also depicted in the bassline played underneath this right hand figure. This is a common theme throughout the piece, and I wanted to ensure that the bassline was not overpowering the melody and almost seem like a mirror image of the right hand, thus completing the image of a butterfly.



Figure 7. Bars 4-5. *Butterfly* by Nils Rohwer 2010

As the piece progresses into the second section, Rohwer again relies on the technical ability of the player to perform the triplets between both hands. As seen in bars 26 and 27 (figure 8) Rohwer decides to have the melody played by the performer's inside right stick, generally an easier mallet to play with, but then also moves the harmonic interest of the section across all four sticks.



Figure 8. Bars 26-27. *Butterfly* by Nils Rohwer 2010

Recital July 2017

As a continuation of my research, I performed a second recital in July 2017, this time in the Phipps concert hall. The aims of this recital were to further explore works by my chosen composers, while also looking at new composers. I therefore decided on a programme of: *Tiento* by Nils Rohwer, *Broken Silence* by Mark Glentworth, *Romantica* by Emmanuel Séjourné and *Ghanaia* by Matthias Schmitt. My hope for this programme was for it to be a contrast from my first recital, and introduce some new compositional and technical ideas utilised by my chosen composers.

Tiento – Nils Rohwer

The opening piece I chose for my second recital, was *Tiento* by Nils Rohwer. This being the second piece I had looked at by Rohwer, it was interesting to see how his compositional style differed from vibraphone to marimba. It seemed a good choice to open a recital as it is a fast, energetic piece with a very interesting contrast between the sections. This piece was published in 2009 and is one of Rohwer's earliest works for solo vibraphone, following *Green Lake* in 2008.

Rohwer also does not prescribe and pedal markings throughout his piece, again leaving it to the performer to decide when to pedal. This could be because of his work with "Piano Meets Vibes" and the idea of allowing the performer more freedom to their performance. This presents a challenge during bars 28 to 33 (example in figure 9), as to ensure clarity of harmony a performer could choose to pedal every beat of the bar. However, I chose to pedal between each of the bars, so that the harmony rang throughout the bar, until a new harmony is established in the next bar. I felt this also gave a much cleaner feel to this section of the piece.

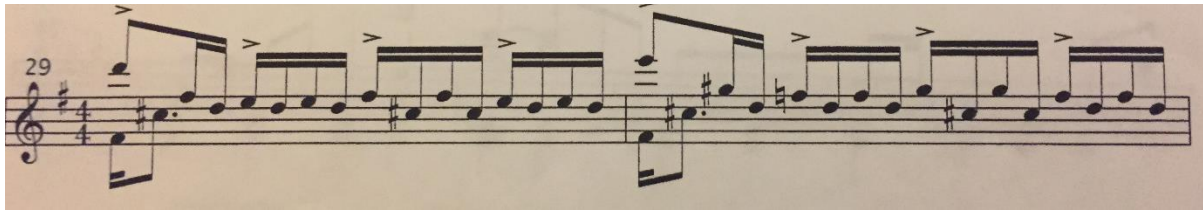


Figure 9. Bars 29-30 *Tiento* by Nils Rohwer 2009

Rohwer also introduces an interesting idea to the piece in bars 39 to 49 (figure 10): the idea of an almost improvised feel in the right hand over a bassline in the left hand. There were several issues to consider when playing this section. Firstly, I wanted to capture the improvised feel Rohwer has clearly written, influenced by his improvised jazz work as part of “Piano meets Vibes”. To do this, it was vital that the bass ostinato was played at a steady and secure tempo, dynamically underneath the melody line in the right hand. With this established, it set up a strong platform to allow a more fluid feel to the rhythm in the right hand. Through this section, Rohwer chooses not to add any dynamic or phrase markings to the music, instead allowing the performer to choose how to shape the melody. I chose to try and shape the melody as it moves up and down the instrument, crescendoing as I moved up the instrument and diminuendoing as it moves back down.

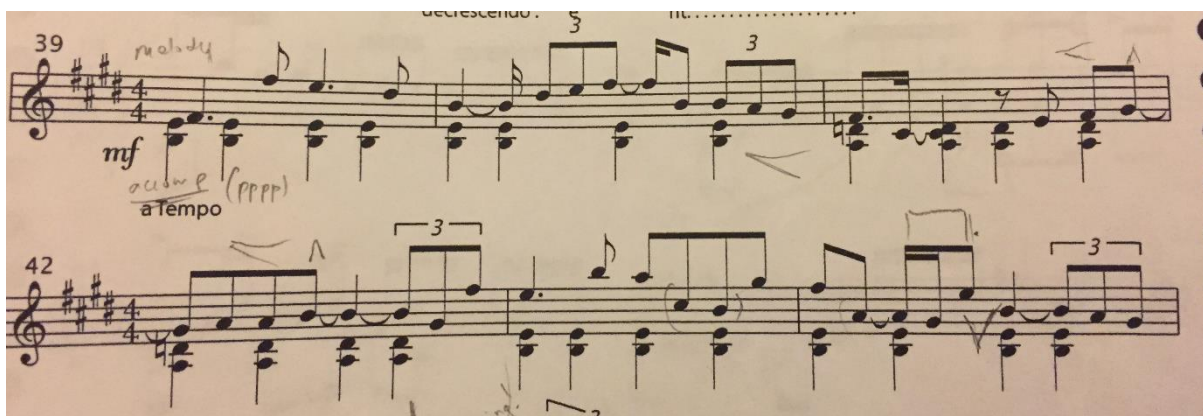


Figure 10. Bars 39-44 *Tiento* by Nils Rohwer 2009

Broken Silence – Mark Glentworth

Mark Glentworth is an English composer and at the age of 16 was one of the youngest percussion students to study at the Royal Northern College of Music, graduating in 1980. After graduating, he began working as a freelance percussionist, regularly working with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the London Sinfonietta. (Composition Today, 2006) His work as a composer covers a vast range of styles from commercial song to orchestral works. One of his first solo percussion pieces *Blues for Gilbert* 1990 for solo vibraphone, is a written transcription of improvised materials by Glentworth. His piece *Broken Silence* was published in 2002 as the first movement in the larger work *Vibraphone Suite No.1*, the other movements being *Ilmo* and *Sunbell*. The piece features a heavy jazz influence and requires an advanced degree of pedalling and mallet dampening.

The opening of the piece is written in a similar style to his previous piece *Blues for Gilbert* 1990, as a written transcription of a free improvised jazz solo. I wanted this piece to follow Rohwer's *Tiento*, to create a contrast whilst keeping a similar theme for the audience. The opening page of the piece flows as a free jazz style cadenza, with many polyrhythms between the two hands of the performer. It was therefore vital that all the rhythms are played clearly, to give a sense of pulse to the section. This is particularly evident in bars 7-9, (figure 11) as even though Glentworth has written pauses, I wanted a clear feeling of movement through the bar.

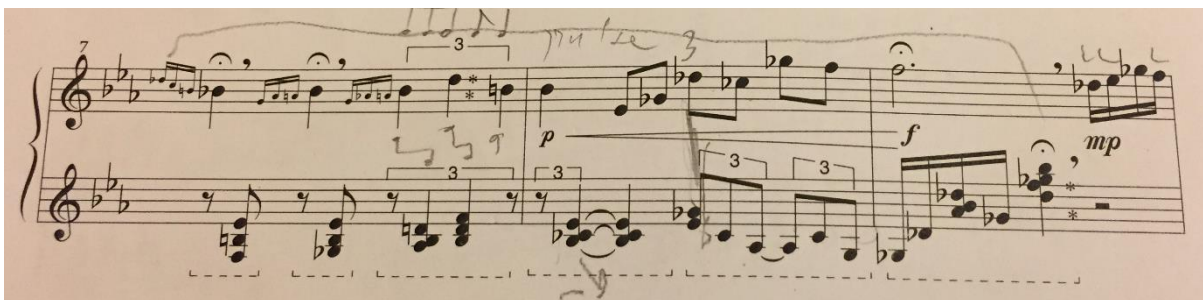


Figure 11. Bars 7-9 *Broken Silence* Mark Glentworth 2002

In the next section of the piece, Glentworth again uses the idea of an improvised solo over the top of a bass ostinato in the performers left hand. During this section, I really wanted to create the feeling that the melody is improvised so that it had a lot of space for rubato over the top of the ostinato (figure 12). This meant that when Glentworth has provided instructions around the tempo of the piece, for example the “held back” in bar 55, I wanted to really exaggerate the rit into this to add interest, but without losing too much of the original tempo.

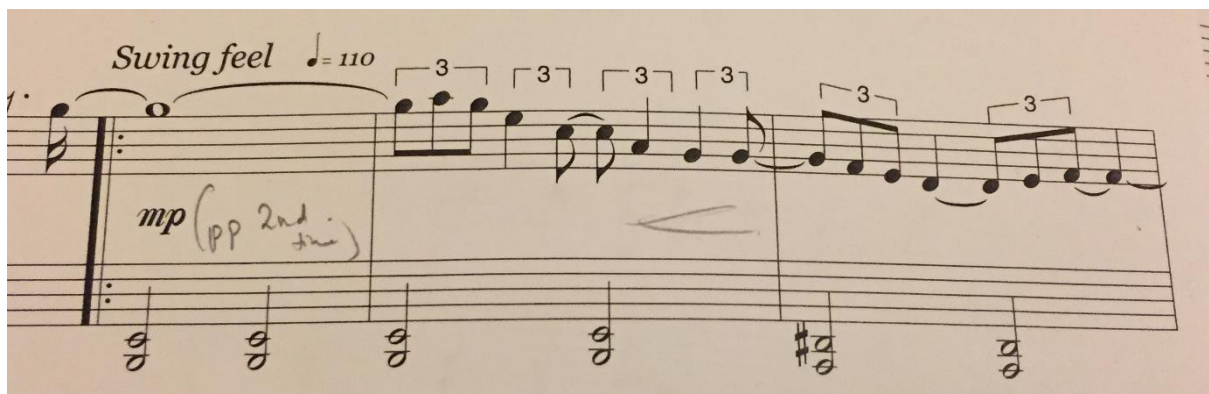


Figure 12. Bars 17-19 *Broken Silence* Mark Glentworth 2002

Romantica – Emmanuel Séjourné

I chose to look at a piece written much later than *Katamiya* 1995 for my next piece by Emmanuel Séjourné to try and get a feel for how his compositional style had changed. His piece *Romantica* 2009 is one of his most recent compositions for solo marimba. In contrast to *Katamiya* this work is significantly more substantial, featuring three contrasting sections.

Where the majority of *Katamiya* was written across two staves, a common way to write for marimba, Séjourné chooses to write only on one staff for most of the rhythmic passages of this piece. This is significantly easier for the performer to read as it compounds the rhythm into one line rather than two. (figure 13)

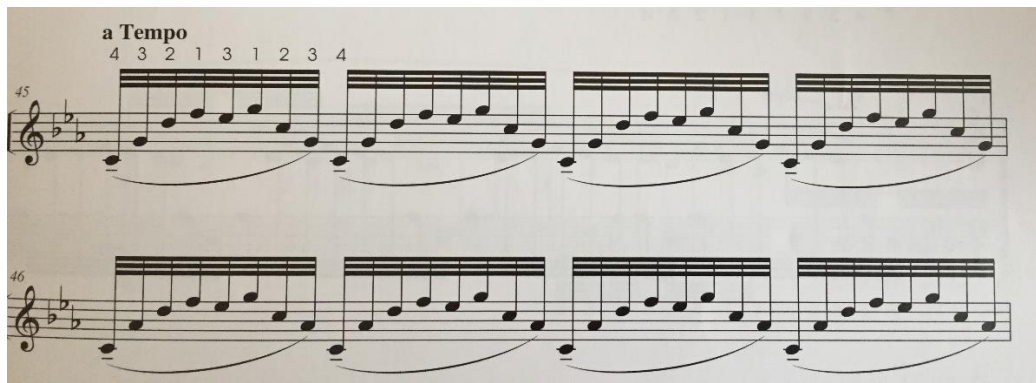


Figure 13. Bars 45-46 *Romantica* by Emmanuel Séjourné 2009

It is clear through the piece that Séjourné has attempted to help the performer through suggested sticking, and ensuring that his material is very idiomatic. This is particularly evident during the cadenza style writing in bar 44 (figure 14) where the pattern of notes fit in a very comfortable pattern for the performer. His suggested sticking for this also appears to be the easiest way to play the bar, as I discovered, having tried many different combinations of patterns. This idiomatic style is also seen through the chorale sections, where he makes the largest interval a 6th, and the smallest a 2nd, very comfortable intervals for percussionists to play and very easy to control.

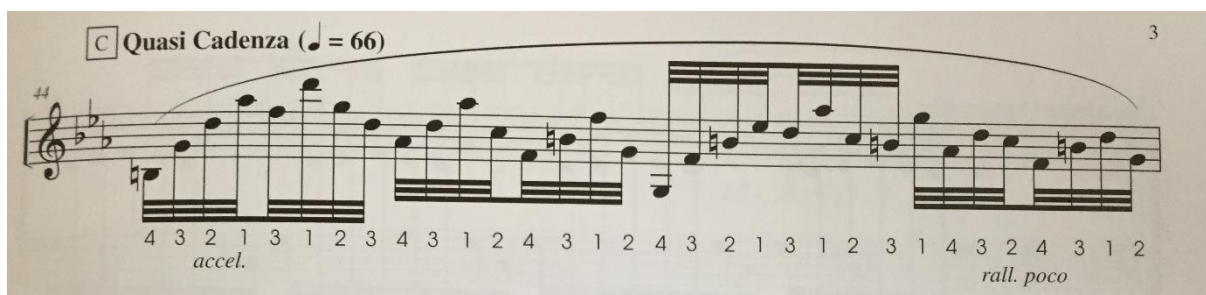


Figure 14. Bar 44 *Romantica* by Emmanuel Séjourné 2009

It was also very interesting to see how Séjourné writes for the full range of the instrument, giving the piece a much wider range. As much as his writing moves from the highest notes of the marimba right down to the very bottom bass notes, he always moves in sequences. This ensures accuracy for the performer as he clearly avoids any large movements of interval (figure 15) This style

of movement across the instrument is also seen in bars 5-9 (figure 16) where the largest interval he writes in is a 6th in the performers right hand, and keeps this as a constant interval.



Figure 15. Bar 64-65 *Romantica* by Emmanuel Séjourné 2009

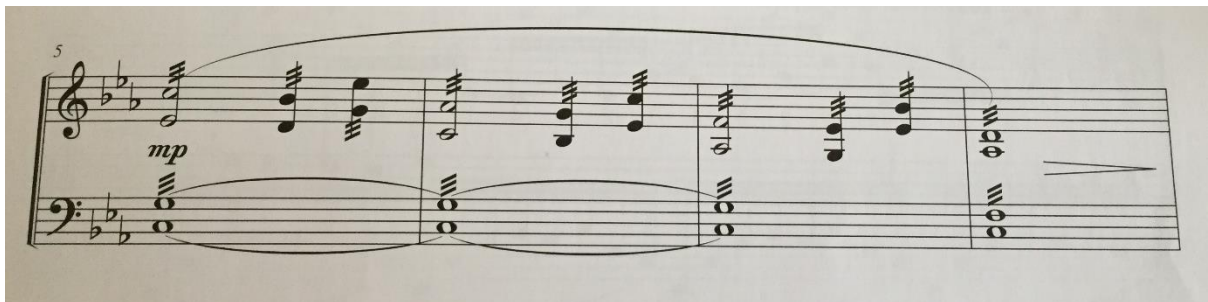


Figure 16. Bar 5-8 *Romantica* by Emmanuel Séjourné 2009

Through my research of solo tuned percussion repertoire and the most influential composers in Europe in the 21st century, it can clearly be seen that there is a wide and rapidly increasing collection of varied and interesting available music available to the solo tuned percussion performer. Although still lagging somewhat behind their string, brass and wind competitors, especially in the field of musical theory and criticism, the recent increase in available and diverse material has hugely contributed to the growth in the study and performance of percussion music, and its establishment in concert life. From being perceived as a primitive and very simplistic family of instruments, their potential as versatile solo instruments is now being realised, with the repertoire

to match. Through the performance of two diverse recitals, it has become clear that a solo tuned percussion recital can be interesting and engaging for an audience, as well as the performer, especially when pieces are carefully selected to showcase the extraordinary range of these instruments.

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